

## [Ed and Mary Jackson]

Orange County

Chapel Hill, N. C.

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W. O. F.

### ED AND MARY JACKSON

Four miles south and east of Chapel Mill, North Carolina is the farm house of Ed Jackson and his wife, Mary Jackson. They cultivate a small farm on shares on a dirt road which leaves US highway No. 15 a mile and a half south of Chapel Hill and runs east through the Mt. Carmel section.

Ed Jackson is only forty-five years old but his shoulders are beginning to stoop, his black hair is turning gray, and three front teeth are missing. Ed says his Grandfather came to the United States from Wales. Since they came to America his people have always been tenants, and the only time he was free from this type of work was a period of six years when he worked in a cotton mill in Carrboro. Even while he was in the mill, his wife and the children ran the farm. He and a friend shared the expense of commuting. He thought the mill work threw too much work and responsibility on his wife and he gave it up. He said with a sigh, "I miss my pay envelope but we ain't going to starve on the farm. I guess I'll stick to the farm."

Mary Jackson is only forty but she looks older than her husband. She too is stooped and lines are appearing in her face. She walks and talks as though she is tired. On each of my visits to the house she had just come in from her work, grading tobacco. Her gray

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cotton dress was too old and faded to be called a house dress and she called it, by way of apology, "my work clothes." Her folks were "just Americans" and farmers always. The school she attended as a girl only lasted four months in the year. As she put it, "I began going with Ed when I was fifteen and four months later we ran off from school and got married. I was too young to have any sense and hadn't had much fun. I reckon I deserve to have a hard time." She was one of nine children and has five of her own. "Three of my younguns got married when they wasn't much older than I was. I still have two at home. Sally, there, is seventeen. She stayed out of school three years after she finished the seventh grade and vowed she wern't going back because she didn't like school." Sally broke in on our talk smiling at me with sparkling black eyes, and said, "But I'm at it again; I'm in the eighth grade and I'm having a good time." Buddie is fourteen and is in the seventh grade of the Chapel Hill School.

"I do my house work and work on the farm like a man," Mary said. "In busy times, I'm up at daylight 3 and by dark I'm too sleepy to read. Rain is sometimes a blessing. "More rain, more rest." The children do all they can after school, on Saturdays, and in the summer, but they don't get tired like me."

The Jacksons have the only log house in the immediate neighborhood. In fact, two log houses three feet apart have been connected and the two give scant space for the family. The house is close to the road and the shade trees are at the rear. The yard is sandy and there is not a flower or a shrub in sight. The house is daubed with white mud and is not ceiled, but has been screened. Jackson said there are five rooms but Mary said there are only four. "I don't know how come there ain't five," Jackson countered. I quickly showed my admiration for the table which held the children's school books and some magazines. This table was about ten feet by two and a half feet, fairly new and of much better materials than anything in the house. "I got that from a friend in town," Mary explained. The front room in which we were sitting is a bedroom. The double bed looks substantial with its plain, iron frame. The floor made of rough pine is fair. The windows boast of no ornament other than the faded, torn shades. There were two dressers in the

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room. The only decorations on the walls were three 4 enlarged pictures of relatives and the head of a deer. A double-barrelled shot-gun hung on pegs in one corner.

The kitchen is back of the bedroom. Wood piled half way to the low ceiling is used for fuel. The table is covered with bright red oilcloth. A new, checked linoleum covers half of the floor. A hound dog and a collie kept their eyes closed while I walked over them on entering the kitchen.

A narrow hall leads to the two bedrooms in the other section of the house. Each of these rooms has a double bed. Sally has the front room and the other is claimed by Buddie.

This house has recently gotten electric lights. The University of North Carolina runs its lines only as far as this house. Other families east of the Jacksons have signed up for lights but at present the university is unable to serve them. An electric iron is the only electric appliance, but if they have a better crop and better prices next year they will get either a washing-machine or a "Kelvinator like the nearest neighbor has."

I took from the study-table a copy of The Southern Planter. Sally, seeing my interest, handed me The Country Home and The Biblical Recorder. They also take the Durham Morning Herald. The only books in the house 5 are two Bibles and some school books.

The Jacksons cultivate 3.6 acres of tobacco, and, since they do not find it profitable to raise cotton, tobacco is their money crop. The tobacco crop last year brought Jackson \$450.00 but the excess of rain and the poor prices this year will cut the returns on this crop. Jackson furnishes a third of the fertilizer for the corn and a fourth for the tobacco and receives a like proportion of the yield. Nineteen acres of corn will furnish the family its meal and in large measure feed the two mules, [3?] three hogs, and a large flock of chickens. The orchard and garden furnished /this year ninety quarts of peaches, forty quarts of berries, and sixty quarts of vegetables. Jackson will sell this year vegetables for five dollars and eggs for twenty dollars. He borrows money from a friend at six percent interest in securing his part of the fertilizer. The landowner has not been called on to furnish pantry

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supplies or advance money for any purpose. He has an old car but cannot afford to run it. His family rides to the Mt. Carmel Baptist church with the neighbors; and when this is not convenient, they walk to church. Fortunately, the Jacksons have had very little illness and very little money has gone towards doctor's bills.

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Jackson always votes the straight "Roosevelt ticket" as a pleasure and a duty. Mrs. Jackson votes only from a sense of duty. They think the country is prospering under the New Deal more than in other years. "I get my share from the owner," Jackson says, "but neither of us gets what's coming to us. If us farmers would stick together like the merchants do, we could get more for our stuff." Although he has no complaints against the landowner, he has moved on the average every third year, "hoping to do better at the next place." He has done a lot of thinking about owning a farm but has not yet seen a way to ownership.

Jackson hunts and fishes in his leisure time. On Saturday afternoons the family walks or rides with a neighbor into Chapel Hill. Sally is "going steady with Bill Young," the son of a neighboring farmer. Bill occasionally gets the use of his father's car and they go "gallavanting" around the country to churches, fairs, ball-games, and movies. Sally lives too far from Chapel Hill to take part in the social life of the high school and must leave for home in the school bus promptly after school is out.